

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A global method of effecting payments over the Internet between users and merchants/ service providers, said method achieved by creating a third party institution which electronically provides the infrastructure to make and receive payments online from anywhere and, consists of the following steps: the third party issues Internet Units of Value (using a combination of smart cards encrypted with country specific codes, and other data encryption technologies) which may be freely purchased by Internet users world wide; user logs on to the web through an existing or new email address and when prompted loads the encrypted information on the IUV to create an 'electronic account' and can subsequently add value(s) to it; when user makes an online purchase decision the purchase value is checked with the balance of the electronic account and if the account balance exceeds or, equals the purchase value the account is debited while the merchant's account is credited; on the receipt of the order the merchant issues an electronic receipt in the form of a confirmatory email to the user and then renders service or, ships product(s) to close the transaction.

2. A method as claimed in step 3 of claim 1 will stem the tide of unsolicited/ junk mails on the world-wide web by discouraging mass mailing of worthless or harmful mails, and other acts of cyber terrorism with the aim of making the Internet more user friendly, business-like and secure, said method achieved by making the purchase and electronic affixing of electronic-stamps (e-stamps) mandatory on email messages either before

they are sent by mailer(s) or responded to by users.

3. A method as set forth in step 2 claim 1 will make the ownership and operation of a valid email address the only gateway for user access to any site on the World Wide Web whether or not such website(s) offer services for free or, for a fee with the aim of eliminating anonymous browsing and, enabling visitors to websites to leave traces in the form of 'electronic foot/ finger prints' (EFP) which may be useful to law enforcement authorities in tracking security breeches world-wide.

4. A method according to claim 1 wherein the third party's server is configured to accept all national currency values and converts them to dollar values using a rates converter at prevailing exchange rates in the task of administering the electronic accounts; a system wherein Internet merchants' websites are linked to the third party's server to record transactions as they occur real time and; a system wherein the third party provides for the collection of all applicable country specific online point-of-sale taxes (for taxable goods/ services) deducts same, and forwards the proceeds to relevant tax authorities.